

DEVELOPING LITERACY AT THE BEGINNING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL THROUGH MYTHICAL TALES AND ACTING

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Abstract: This article presents a research project conducted in a class of secondary school (first year) which linked reading, writing and acting. In this project, the teacher attempted to provide a support system for both first and second language acquisition. The idea was to use Greek tales published in a simplified version to look for ideas, vocabulary, routines, in other words what students were able to use when they acted then wrote the text of their own play. This constant back and forth between the oral and written format under the guidance of the expert formed the backbone of the system designed to help them discover a language beyond the daily contacts and a deep displeasure at school. With the help of the adults and of the mediating tools such as literature and acting they were able to collectively write a play that integrated many aspects of written French. In books they discovered worlds beyond their own that they can access when they open and use them. These crucial lessons, not only for students who are considered unable to study with a standard curriculum but also for teachers who are to work with them or similar students, serve to question notions such as creative drama and literacy.

Keywords: literacy, language acquisition support system, mediating tools, expert guidance, creative drama, teacher education

Dutch. Samenvatting. [Translation Tanja Janssen]. In dit artikel wordt een onderzoeksproject gepresenteerd dat werd uitgevoerd in één klas van het voortgezet onderwijs (eerste leerjaar), waarin lezen, schrijven en acteren gecombineerd werden. In dit project trachtte de leraar ondersteuning te geven aan zowel eerste- als tweedetaalverwerving. Het idee was om Griekse verhalen (gepubliceerd in vereenvoudigde vorm) te gebruiken en daarin te zoeken naar ideeën, woorden, routines, kortom alles wat leerlingen konden gebruiken voor het acteren, en daarna hun eigen toneelstuk te schrijven. Dit voortdurende heen en weer gaan tussen mondelinge en schriftelijke vormen onder leiding van een deskundige vormde de ruggegraat van het systeem, bedoeld om hen te helpen een taal te ontdekken buiten de dagelijkse contacten en een diep ongenoegen op school. Met behulp van de volwassenen en hulpmiddelen zoals literatuur en acteren waren zij in staat samen een toneelstuk te schrijven waarin veel aspecten van het geschreven

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Frans geïntegreerd waren. In boeken ontdekten zij werelden buiten dat van henzelf waartoe zij toegang krijgen als zij ze openen en gebruiken. Deze cruciale lessen, - cruciaal niet alleen voor leerlingen die niet kunnen leren in het gewone, standaard curriculum maar ook voor leraren die met deze of vergelijkbare leerlingen moeten werken - zetten vraagtekens bij noties zoals creatief drama en geletterdheid.

French. Résumé. [Translation Laurence Pasa]

Cet article présente un projet de recherche conduit dans une classe de collège (6^{ème}) autour de la lecture, l'écriture et l'action. Dans ce projet, le professeur a tenté de mettre en place un dispositif d'aide à l'apprentissage du français langue maternelle et langue seconde. L'idée était d'utiliser les contes grecs édités dans une version simplifiée pour rechercher des idées, du vocabulaire, des routines, autrement dit tout ce que les élèves pouvaient mobiliser ensuite pour créer leur propre texte et le mettre en scène. Ces allers-retours permanents entre l'oral et l'écrit, sous les conseils de l'expert, constituaient l'épine dorsale de ce dispositif conçu pour aider les élèves dans leur découverte du langage écrit, loin des usages quotidiens et de leur profond mécontentement à l'école. Avec l'aide des adultes et des outils de médiation tels que la littérature et l'action, ils ont pu écrire collectivement une pièce en intégrant de nombreuses dimensions du français écrit. Dans les livres, ils ont découvert des mondes bien différents de ceux auxquels ils avaient accès eux-mêmes en les consultant. Ces leçons cruciales, pour les élèves considérés comme incapables d'apprendre avec un programme d'enseignement classique mais aussi pour les professeurs qui doivent travailler avec eux ou avec des élèves semblables, ont permis de remettre en cause des notions telles que la création théâtrale et la littéracie.

German. Zusammenfassung. [Translation Irene Pieper]

Die Förderung des Leseverstehens am Beginn der Sekundarstufe durch mythische Erzählungen und Drama

Der Beitrag stellt ein Forschungsprojekt vor, das in einer Klasse am Beginn der Sekundarstufe durchgeführt wurde und das Lesen, Schreiben, und szenisches Spiel verband. Die Lehrperson versuchte ein Unterstützungssystem für den Erst- und Zweitspracherwerb bereit zu stellen. Die Grundidee war, griechische Erzählungen in vereinfachter Form zu nutzen und darin nach Ideen, Wortmaterial und Routinen zu suchen, die die SchülerInnen heranziehen konnten, wenn sie selbst spielten und den Text ihres eigenen Stücks schrieben. Das kontinuierliche Hin und Her zwischen mündlichem und schriftlichem Format unter Anleitung der Lehrperson bildete den Kern des Unterstützungssystems, das den SchülerInnen helfen sollte, eine Sprache jenseits der alltäglichen Kontakte, aber auch jenseits einer tiefen Ablehnung der Schule zu finden. Mit der Hilfe der Erwachsenen und durch die *Mediationswerkzeuge* der Literatur und des Theaterspiels konnten sie gemeinsam ein Stück schreiben, das viele Aspekte des Schriftfranzösischen umfasste. In den Büchern entdeckten sie Welten jenseits ihrer eigenen. Sie gewannen Zugang zu diesen und konnten sie in Gebrauch nehmen. Diese Stunden wurden zu Schlüsselstunden nicht nur für die SchülerInnen, die als unfähig galten, mit dem Standard-Curriculum zu arbeiten, sondern auch für die LehrerInnen, die mit ihnen arbeiteten. Sie werden zum Anlass, Konzepte wie kreatives Drama und Literacy zu befragen.

Portuguese. Resumo. [Translation Paulo Feytor Pinto]

Neste texto apresenta-se um trabalho de investigação realizado numa turma do secundário (primeiro ano) e que pôs em relação a leitura, a escrita e a representação dramática. Neste projecto, o professor procurou conceber um sistema de apoio tanto para a aquisição da língua materna como da língua não materna. A ideia era utilizar versões simplificadas de lendas gregas para encontrar ideias, vocabulário, rotinas, por outras palavras, tudo aquilo de que os alunos precisavam para representar e escrever uma peça da sua autoria. Este vaivém entre a oralidade e a escrita sob a orientação de um perito constituiu o eixo central do sistema concebido para ajudar os estudantes a descobrir uma língua para além do contacto quotidiano e desagradável que a escola proporciona. Com a ajuda dos adultos e de dispositivos mediadores como a literatura e a representação, foi-lhes possível escrever colectivamente uma peça que integrou muitos aspectos do francês escrito. Em livros, descobriram mundos para além dos seus, a que podem aceder quando os abrem e usam. Estas aulas cruciais, não só para os estudantes que são considerados incapazes de estudar pelo currículo regular, mas também para os seus professores, servem para questionar noções como dramaturgia criativa e literacia.

Palavras-chave: literacia, sistema de apoio à aquisição linguística, ferramentas de mediação, orientação por peritos, dramaturgia criativa, formação de professores.

Polish. Streszczenie [Translation Elżbieta Awramiuk]

Niniejszy artykuł omawia przeprowadzony w jednej z klas szkoły średniej (pierwszy rok) projekt badawczy, który łączy czytanie, pisanie i aktorstwo. W projekcie tym nauczyciel próbował wprowadzić system wspierający przyswajanie zarówno języka ojczystego, jak i języka drugiego. Pomysł polegał na wykorzystaniu greckich mitów publikowanych w uproszczonej wersji do szukania wyobrażeń, słownictwa i układów, innymi słowy tego, co uczniowie mogli wykorzystać podczas gry, a następnie pisania tekstu własnej sztuki. To działanie tam i z powrotem między mówionym a pisanym pod przewodnictwem eksperta stworzył trzon systemu zaprojektowanego po to, aby pomóc im odkryć język poza codziennym kontaktem i nudą szkolnej nauki. Z pomocą osób dorosłych i za pośrednictwem narzędzi takich jak literatura lub aktorstwo byli zdolni wspólnie pisać sztukę, co pozwalało integrować wiele aspektów pisanego języka francuskiego. W książkach odkrywali światy poza ich własnym, do których uzyskiwali dostęp, kiedy je otwierali i ich używali. Te istotne lekcje, nie tylko dla uczniów uważanych za niezdolnych do pracy w ramach standardowego szkolnego programu, ale także dla nauczycieli, którzy mieli z nimi lub z im podobnymi pracować, pozwalają przewartościować poglądy na twórczą dramę oraz umiejętność czytania i pisania.

Słowa-klucze: umiejętność czytania i pisania, system wspomagający przyswajanie języka, narzędzia medialne, wskazówki eksperta, twórcza drama, edukacja nauczycieli

1. FRANCE AS A GLOBAL BUT SPECIFIC CONTEXT

France maintained the ideal of a monolingual society particularly through school ('Education Nationale') and other institutions such as 'l'Académie Française'. All children in school must produce their academic writings in standardized French, regardless of their cultural and language histories and contexts. Moreover, institutional policies tend to promote language standardization at the expense of diversity present in the classrooms.

This situation, relevant in many countries of the western world (see Bean & al, 2003; McClenaghan & Doecke, 2005), takes a specific perspective when situated in a French context. Standard French (especially in school) is not just a question of grammar and vocabulary and is associated with experts (writers, politicians ...). Hence, in order to gain a position within French society, speakers of languages other than French¹ have to adopt the literary and political language of experts.

Literacy is linked to the highly valued standardized French. The French expression 'belles lettres' (to be translated word for word as 'beautiful letters') should suffice to translate the value attached to certain forms and genres of literature. Thus the goal set for all students in French schools is to be the future composers of those 'belles lettres'. This ideal of a student being capable of replacing the present writer or public figure is tested day after day in classes.

In reality, those responsible for preparing this ideal student are faced with another constraint inherent to the French public system: equality; in other words, all must be potential replacements. This calls teaching practice into question.

Literacy is not only discussed in the realm of school. For example, parents and non-parents seem to adhere to the idea that, to write well, it is necessary to read a

¹ I refer to either a variety of French, usually called in a derogative way with the expression of 'petit nègre' (translated word for word as 'little nigger', see Kerbrat Orechioni (2004), on the use of *petit* with values other than denotative) or any dialect of Arabic spoken by the children of Northern African descent.

lot. This supposedly necessary link between reading and writing is an idea shared by both experts and non-experts in literacy:

Writing is the extension of reading. It is no longer possible to think that there is a break between the acts of reading and writing of a qualitative type. The first is silent creativity, from using an existing text, the second is the same creativity, but made explicit because it brings out a new text. (Certeau, 1980, our translation²)

Cornaz (2000) found that a child reads when he himself is ready to do it. What can be said of teachers if they are unable to trigger this process? Vygotsky (1934:1997) speaks of the relationship between instruction and development. This question is more critical currently considering the ultimate goal set by education policy: 80% of students must finish secondary school and obtain the certificate called baccalauréat. National tests have been invented to evaluate the skills relative to “the three R’s” (to use the English saying) at the end of primary schools. For those who do not reach standard levels, teachers are required to design programs that would enable these students to reach the so-called ‘literate’ level.

2. WHY IS DRAMA OFTEN PART OF THESE PROGRAMS?

Disregarding the special sections where drama is taught like literature or music, teachers who are not experts used drama differently depending on the general students’ level of competence. For those highly proficient, students and professors get involved in extra-curricular activities in drama clubs using the canonical classics. For those unable to follow the standard curriculum, professors decide to use drama differently. Drama is considered to help people (children and adults alike, when they are physically, socially or financially handicapped (see the many issues of *Culture et Démocratie* at <http://www.cdkd.be>) who are feeling insecure due to their handicap(s) to gain self-confidence, discover and capitalize on their skills and talents, meet other people, and to create a serious project they can be proud of³. In some schools drama is also an answer for the adults responsible that enables them to understand students who lack motivation to study or produce school work of any kind, who are disruptive in class and sometimes violent, because they find schoolwork meaningless. Often these students experience difficulty with speaking, reading and writing.

Integrating drama into the curriculum yields varied and various results. By comparing experimental groups that used drama as an integrated pedagogical activity

² *L’écriture est le prolongement de la lecture. Il faut cesser de supposer une césure qualitative entre l’acte de lire et celui d’écrire. Le premier est créativité silencieuse, investie dans l’usage qu’on fait d’un texte ; le second est cette même créativité, mais explicitée dans la production d’un nouveau texte. (Certeau, 1980)*

³ *See for example the programmes to become a professional in art-therapy in French universities : ‘L’Art-thérapie est l’exploitation du potentiel artistique dans une visée humanitaire et thérapeutique. L’art-thérapeute est une personne qui souhaite mettre sa compétence artistique au service du soin ou de l’assistance aux personnes malades, handicapées, souffrant de troubles psychologiques et/ou physiques ou ayant des retards dans les acquisitions et le développement de leur personnalité.’*

with control groups, studies⁴ were able to point to the impact creative drama programs had on children with learning disabilities: that is, they improve linguistically and socially. Because drama has to do with words and the necessary relation to others, actors and audience, these results do not appear too far-fetched. However, what remains unclear is why and how the integration of a creative drama program in the curriculum results in bettering social and linguistic skills.

3. TWO PROJECTS: IN PEDAGOGY AND IN RESEARCH

3.1 Learning how to read and write in French L2

This research project investigated the relation between instruction and development of children who recently arrived in France (from now on French L2 students) and who, after a couple of months of specific instruction designed to give them the basics in French, joined their age group and continued their learning of French concomitantly with learning History, Mathematics ...

We were interested in how students dealt with the written code and how they attempted to acquire the necessary skills to produce in L2; hence, the necessity to look at this process within the setting where reading and writing are taught.

Some of these French L2 students experience difficulties in reading and writing especially when they join a class in junior high or high schools. Failure is more likely to happen if a student has received little education prior to his arrival in France. French teachers, whose task is to increase students' proficiency in French while giving them a cultural background, are forced to find remedial solutions.

In cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics, researchers have established that to be able to understand a text it is necessary to use different types of skills. Some are directly linked to the words, the grammar used, but others are linked to the macro-structure behind the wording and are influenced by the cultural background these children have grown up into (Maître de Pembroke, Legros & Rysman, 2001). French L2 students and bilinguals who have acquired a primary language (from now on L1) different from French before going to school have to acquire the skills associated with French culture. Moreover, researchers have found that comprehension is enhanced when a text is read out loud to children with learning disabilities since the first access to language for anyone is through the oral code. If remedial solutions are to be offered they have to be based on oracy and culture.

With the help of a French teacher who is also an Education researcher, two researchers in Second Language Acquisition decided to regularly observe French L2 students who joined monolingual and bilingual children with learning disabilities. The observation period lasted six months. The observation and the data collection were made around a pedagogical project in which all students, French L1 & L2bilinguals participated. The method used to analyze the data is taken from the ethnography of communication.

⁴ To name a few, see the compendium made about drama which concludes with the essay by Caterall, 'Research on Drama and Theater on Education' or the issue of *Champions of Change* edited by Fiske about the *Impact of the Arts on Learning*.

3.2 Drama as a pedagogical tool to remediate learning difficulties and access literacy

The idea of the pedagogical project originated from the acknowledgement that the teaching methods that consist in increasing metalinguistic awareness to learn how to read and write failed with some students. Because the junior high school where the French teacher works is an area where the community is formed of many people socially (socioeconomically?) deprived, a partnership has been built between the school and a troop of comedians (Théâtre Actions Trétaux). The idea was that comedians worked with students to help them develop their self-confidence. Besides, the school has opened several classes at different levels for students who failed national tests and needed remedial courses. For those entering the first grade of secondary education, the selection is made by the primary teachers. Students are said to be able to decipher a text but are unable to 'read' it on their own. Moreover, they very often hate doing it because it represents too much stress and effort for not much result. Conversely, when these same students had the chance to act in primary, they liked it. In primary, acting means to learn a text specially written for their age group, either published or made by the comedian from daily situations these students experience, and then to perform.

To connect drama activities which before were disconnected from other pedagogical activities in the French class was the core of the pedagogical project initiated by the French teacher. She believed it would interweave school activities to render knowledge taught in school meaningful, hence offering these children who are in trouble a new position as a student in the school institution.

The six month observation period corresponds to the pedagogical sequence and is divided into five steps:

In the first step, children were asked to bring home and read twenty different tales from a European cultural background (all included in a list given by the Ministry of Public Education). They were given class time to discuss the tales and were asked to choose one to retell to the others in order to work on oral expression. Later on, a storyteller came to tell tales from other cultural backgrounds; after the students listened to the different tales they engaged in a discussion with the storyteller about the meaning of the tales.

In the second step, they were asked to read a book about a Greek myth linked to the programs of literature and history, mythology and antiquity. The choice was made by the professor and they had to elaborate a questionnaire based on their readings for other students to work with. They compared and evaluated the different questions invented by each to select the best. This prepared them to work together for the best result.

In the third step, the comedian took a more central role. Under her guidance entire sessions were devoted to improvisations on situations and feelings the professor and the comedian had extracted from the book about the Greek myth: for example, meeting a stranger, fear... Then after in class they searched for similar feelings or situations they had played with the comedian in the book. They were asked to adapt the excerpts they found, which were in narrative style, for future acting.

In the fourth step, they discussed the myth itself and selected a topic around which they based their own play: win a fight and as a result become a king. Then they acted with the comedian, wrote down again what was said spontaneously, used the original text to improve what was written and started the whole process again: act, write, and improve. To be able to create the ultimate version of the text, they compiled the individual versions, selected the best parts and then composed the final version by moving around parts of the text and adding details, finally discovering (inventing?) stylish effects. In the middle of this process, the professor and the comedian introduced an antique choir, a coryphée and a shadow for the main character (Oedipus) so that everybody had an equal part in the play. The antique choir and the coryphée were also a means to write down their in-class debates around the myth, debates which made the myth meaningful.

The fifth step was the performance in front of other children and adults of the school plus their families.

The driving idea for the program to work is that students must take an equal part in the play. They all took part in the choir at one point. The fact that they stayed on stage during the whole play is a means to keep high their investment in the play. They were responsible for designing elements of clothing or of the decorations to facilitate the deciphering of the play and its characters by the audience (especially members of their families who came for the performance). These elements were attached to a character and thus moved from one student to another as they each played the same character. The art teacher was thus involved too in the program.

The comedian used the students' reactions including negative ones. His role is not to judge but to help students give birth to their expression, both verbal and corporal. The teacher is the mediator in the group. Teacher and comedian both outline similarities and differences between the different solutions offered by students. They never use their knowledge to impose a solution, on the contrary they distribute turns so that students all participate in the elaboration of the solution.

4. DATA

4.1 Participants

The class was formed with children, 18 of them, with varied linguistic backgrounds. The three French L2 students were primarily schooled in a class designed for foreigners but attended all lessons which had to do with the pedagogical project with those who only studied in France. This study concentrates more on those of the students who are French and Arabic speakers (mainly Algerian and Moroccan dialects of Arabic), early bilinguals or French L2/Arabic L1 speakers. The reason is twofold: first, to control the number of factors when we analyze the productions, second, because Arabic is a stigmatized language in French schools, being bilingual is thus not considered an asset. We compare the productions of these students with those of monolingual students who went through the same program.

4.2 Method

The data is qualitative and the data collection uses methods adopted in clinical qualitative research: case study, participant observation, long interviews. Therefore the type of data collected is naturalistic and consists in:

- Video and audio tapes of class discussions that dealt with the project before it started and while it lasted; some of the tale retellings in class; all the sessions with the comedian; sessions when the text was collaboratively created from each one's individual writing.
- We also conducted interviews with some of the children. With the French L2 students, we asked them to talk about what they did in their class for foreigners and how they viewed the project in relation to their learning French. For those who had only studied in France, we asked them to recall previous experiences at school which also had to do with learning French and asked them what they thought about what they were doing all together.
- Moreover since we are interested in the influence of creative drama programs on language acquisition, especially on reading and writing, we collected the booklets for the national testing on reading, writing, grammar and the students' written productions throughout the year.

5. RESULTS

The results will be divided in two: those related to social skills and feeling on the one hand and to linguistic skills and learning on the other.

5.1 From an underclass of students to a valued position inside the institution.

Before they started acting, the students view their own performance generally inadequate for the task given:

(1) Bekhta, EB, retelling a tale she read⁵

Teacher: *quelle histoire nous présentes-tu Bekhta?*

T: what story will you tell us B?

Bekhta: *'Jacques et les haricots magiques' j'ai peur de pas bien raconter.*

B: Jacques and the magic beans... I'm afraid I won't tell it well.

Sometimes they are able to point at specific problems they have in solving the task and it has to do with using language:

⁵ Students were given names in order to make them anonymous. For each example, the name of the student is followed with a code: FL1 if they are monolingual, EB if they are early bilingual, LB if they are late bilingual and FL2 if they are French L2 speaker. Then follows the type of data the example is extracted from.

The conventions for the examples are mainly orthographic. However, some symbols are used to convey some of the features important for the transcription from oral to written, such as a question mark when the tone is clearly that of a question even though the syntax is that of an assertion, an apostrophe when a letter is not pronounced, a colon when a sound is lengthened and an exclamation mark when the tone shows there is some emphasis into what is being said.

(2) Chimène, LB, retelling a tale she read

Chimène: J'ai une question est-ce que par exemple si je racontais mon texte est-ce que vous me poseriez des questions parce que moi j'arrive pas trop à raconter l'histoire parce que j'fait tout le temps et puis . . .

(C : I have a question, will you, for example if I tell my text, will you ask me questions because I'm not really capable of telling the story cause I always do and then . . .)

It confirms what Bean & al (2003) said: that feelings about language tend to be deeper and more explosive than feelings about ideas.

When it comes to the project they are supposed to work together on, hopes are not much higher:

(3) Alfonso, LB & Hassan, EB, class discussion

Teacher: Alfonso qu'est-ce que tu trouves d'ennuyeux?

T: A what do you find boring?

Alfonso: bah apprendre des trucs c'est ennuyeux

A: well to learn something is boring

Teacher: toi c'est qui t'ennuie c'est d'apprendre?

T: for you what is boring for you to learn?

Alfonso: j'sais pas si c'est trop long c'est ça

A: I don't know if it's too long that's why

Hassan: c'est trop dur en plus

H: it's too hard on top of it

A feeling shared by these students and often mentioned in studies about programs with ethnically diverse students is: *theater is not for us* (Horn, 1992).

(4) Farida, EB, class discussion

Teacher: qu'est-ce que tu veux dire Farida?

T: what do you want to say Farida?

Farida : comme Arthur

F: like Arthur

Teacher: qu'est-ce que tu veux dire que tu as honte devant les autres?

T: what do you mean that you are ashamed in front of the others?

Another question that comes to many students' minds is about working together:

(5) Majda, EB, class discussion

Majda: par exemple si on écrit eh si on écrit eh quelques lignes par exemple qu'ça plaît pas à quelqu'un par exemple eh on va le faire quand même?

(for example if we write eh if we write eh few lines for example it doesn't please somebody for example eh we're gonna do it anyway?)

The students started to improvise on the fight with the sphinx. At first the girls who decided to play the sphinx kept on fighting and criticizing one another. They were made by the actress to think that it was indeed monstrous to be constantly fighting and their bickering was transformed into acting and later on into a text for the main scene:

(6) Chimène, LB, Lamia, & Majda, EB, improvisation & text of the play

Sphinx/ Chimène: Oh mais, j'ai pas envie ! Les voila qui dansent maintenant.

C: Oh but I don't want to! Look they're dancing now

Sphinx/Lamia: Je n'ai pas envie de danser. J'ai faim moi.

L: I don't want to dance I'm hungry

Sphinx/ Chimène: Arrêtez un peu vos bêtises.
 C: Will you stop acting silly
Sphinx/Hassan, Majda et Kay: Oh là là là tu n'es vraiment pas drôle!
 (H, M & K: Really, you're not funny)

Distribution of roles made some very unhappy, either because they were not given a prominent role or because they were given too much:

(7) Brice, FL1, interview
Brice: pourquoi Oedipe il a une ombre?
 (B: why does Oedipus have a shadow?)

(8) Arthur, FL1, video of rehearsal
Comedian: Arthur tu vas faire l'ombre de Oedipe
 C: Arthur you're gonna do Oedipus's shadow
Arthur: non moi j'veux pas jouer
 A: no I don't want to play

Students also complained because some of them took too much time to rehearse their part leaving not enough session time for the others who came after in the play:

(9) Hassan, EB, Interview
Hassan: mais aussi ça va ça va nous faire perdre notre temps c'est comme si qu'on va rater une séance ben on va faire dix minutes ben oui alors que nous quand on a fait not séan/ quand quand c'était la deuxième eh deuxième eh la deuxième scène là (...) moi j'avais même pas fait j'avais rien fait à la deuxième heure même j'ai fait juste le truc ouais j'avais juste fait le truc du cheval sinon j'aurai rien fait
 (H: but also it's gonna make us lose time it's as if we're gonna lose a session see we're gonna do ten minutes see yes when we did our ses/ when it was the second scene I didn't do I didn't do anything the second hour yeah I just did the thing yeah I just did the thing with the horse otherwise I would have done nothing)

However, one of the reasons why Hassan complains is because he wants things done well:

(10) Hassan, EB, Interview
Teacher: ... souvent enfin j'ai remarqué que lorsque t'as le sentiment d'mal jouer ton personnage parce que par exemple tu as ri tu demandes à recommencer
 T: often I noticed that when you feel you have not played well because for example you giggled you ask to start again
Hassan: ben oui (ah yeah)
Teacher: pourquoi? (why?)
Hassan: ben parce que c'était mal fait ben faut s'entraîner hein si c'est mal fait si c'est mal fait faut recommencer
 H: well when it's not well done then we must rehearse eh if it's badly done if it's bad we must start again

During the interview we conducted with Arthur (French L1) who had not read a page of a book in the first part of the year he told us with some pride that he had read more than half the last one on the list (see Annex A). Similarly, when during these interviews we asked if they had problems with memorizing their part they all answered negatively. These interviews took place almost at the end of the observation period and a change of attitude is noticeable since when they had to retell the

tale they chose, they felt the need to keep the book with them because they were unsure of remembering it.

Helping one another at the end becomes a norm:

(11) Chimène, LB, video of collective writing of the end of the text
<Sophie is asked by the professor to sum up the modifications brought to the text. She starts but doesn't remember the final version anymore because it is not written on the board and she wasn't able to take it down Chimène who sits next to her points at the sentence which has been modified and gives her the modification while everybody speaks about other matters>

Teacher: ah y a des problèmes vous avez le nez en l'air vous laissez les autres travailler même X a le nez en l'air

T: ah there are problems you don't pay attention you let the others work even X is absent

Chimène: moi j'l'aide moi moi j'l'aide madame

C (who raises her head): I help her I: I help her madam

Chimène is the same student who said before *I don't want to* (example (6)) when asked to take part with the others in the first sessions of acting.

At the end when they were to perform in front of people who had not been with them all along, including their French teacher, the comedian and the two researchers who taped the different steps, Brice who played Oedipus's part was so anxious that he hid in the washroom. The others went and convinced him to come out and the student who played his shadow in the first scene whispered Brice's lines when he hesitated. Supported by the others, he gained back self confidence and finished the play with enthusiasm.

When they repeated the performance, one of the students went home to dress specifically for the performance. Unfortunately, he was not back on time. Because they had worked on the text and memorized the lines even if they were not theirs, they replaced the missing actor. When he finally showed up at the end, he was very disappointed because he had missed it. All the others comforted him instead of yelling at him.

If the pride we read on all the students' faces after they performed and received heavy applause is a reward all adults, teacher, director and researchers, took happily, it is important to go beyond the affect. Students seem to have improved in some areas. De la Cruz (1995) mentions in her study necessary social skills to generally succeed at school: courtesy to others, self control. As for focus and social compliance, these skills are more directly linked to the task they get involved in and thus vary accordingly.

5.2 Language acquisition & literacy

5.2.1 About reading

Working together produces some unexpected results:

(12) Arthur, FL1, written answers to a questionnaire on a book

j'ai lu ce livre quinze jours J'ai lu 0 pages J'ai aimé ♥

(I read this book fifteen days, I read 0 pages, I loved it ♥)

This is what Arthur writes when he is being asked about one book on the list (see Annex A, Mémoires d'un chien). Despite his attempts and failure to turn the pages, Arthur has read it through the others and been able to participate in discussions that took place around the content of the book. Later on with the book which was the for the play (see Annex A, Œdipe le Maudit), he admitted with some others that it was the first one they actually read some pieces of.

For the French L2 students, who have not yet reached the level where they can read books written in French on their own, acting is a good incentive. In an interview conducted with a student who had arrived in France six months prior to the interview, this is what she declares:

- (13) Kenitra, FL2, interview
Int: est-ce que tu l'as lu le livre tu sais
 I: did you read the book you know
Kenitra: le poisson?
 K: the fish?
Int: non pas le poisson mais le livre d'Œdipe
 I: no not the fish but the book about Oedipus
Kenitra: {non}
Int: {non} tu l'as pas lu celui-là
 I: no you didn't read it that one
Kenitra: jamais
 K: never
Int: tu l'as jamais lu eh est-ce que tu penses que tu pourrais le lire maintenant le livre tu sais à partir duquel le texte de théâtre a été fait ? est-ce que tu penses que tu pourrais le lire maintenant?
 I: you never read it do you think that you could read it now the book you know the book the play was inspired from? Do you think you could read it now?
Kenitra: oui
Int: tu aimerais le lire?
 I: would you like to read it?
Kenitra: oui
Int: ah oui bon ben on peut toujours demander à Mme M (Teacher) qu'elle te passe qu'elle te passe un livre
 I: oh so we can always ask Teacher to lend you one

Discussions around the book in order to enrich the text of the play led to a certain deconstruction of the text. Some like Hassan found new reading procedures he could later use to figure out if he liked a book and thus might want to read it:

- (14) Hassan, EB, interview
Int: comment tu décides si t'aimes bien un livre ou si t'aimes pas un livre?
 I: how do you decide if you like a book or not?
Hassan: d'abord parce quand j'lis les premières pages j'sais si c'est bien j'vais lire la quatrième de couverture si j'aime bien j'vais le lire si j'aime pas j'vais pas
 H: first because when I read the first pages I know if it's good I'm gonna read the blurb if I like it I'm gonna read it if not I won't

At first, the students were mainly interested in acting the fight over the monster then over Laïos because of the result: victory. They discovered that to be able to understand the story of Oedipus and how he was different from other characters related to him in the Greek myths they read (see Annex A, Cassandre) it was necessary to read more in order to build what Labov (1972) would call the orientation. This strategy of starting a narrative with the complicating situation to be followed by the orientation

and/or the coda slightly changes their ideas on what reading is: as of then it only meant opening on the first page and painfully trying to turn one page after the other.

At the end of the year students had several procedures at their disposal which they associate with the word 'reading': deciphering on the one hand, understanding a text on the other. Their use of the word 'lire' (=read) expresses this variety implicitly. In example (12), read 0 pages (=deciphering) and read the book (= understanding the text) In example (13) not read the book about Oedipus means not open the book and turn the pages from the first to the last, even though Kenitra read many excerpts to write the text of the play and was able to understand the story of Oedipus.

5.2.2 About text structure

Once they mentally pictured a scene, they needed to put words on it beyond the grunt or cries they naturally produced when they acted. They then were invited to take out the book from their bags and use it for their benefit:

(15) Lamia, written production

Séquence 4: Le mythe

Oedipe: C'est le désert ici

C'est calme, « y'a quelqu'un »

~~*Il fait chaud. Il fait tiède. J'aime le printemps*~~

Les paysans:

4th sequence, the myth, O: this place was deserted, it is quiet, is there anybody, it is warm out I love spring, the peasants: ,

Oedipe: Ca fait des heures que je marche, , c'est calme, c'est tiède, Il fait chaud.

J'adore le printemps. C'est le désert ici.

Les paysans: « part d'ici c'est pas bien ici part, dégage, part part »

Et la sphinx arriva

O: I've been walking for hours, , it's quiet, it's warm, it's hot, I love spring. It is like a desert here, the peasants: go away from here, it's not good here go, out, go, go, and the sphinx arrived)

Lamia took out some sentences from the chapter she worked with (see Annex B) but looking back at the ones she chose she realized that it lacked some consistency; for example be quiet and be warm are first degrees in scales where desert and hot are higher. Moreover, when one realizes he is alone it takes precedence over nicer feelings such as loving the spring period, more so when the idea is to build suspense, for this scene is right before the encounter with the sphinx. She thus crossed out the first attempt and started afresh.

They also worked on the text structure altogether when they composed the text after having selected the sentences they thought were the best from the individual versions:

(16) Majda, EB & Brice, FL1, class session about writing together

Teacher: oui alors allons y donc vous voudriez mettre alors voilà vous voudriez qu'on intervertisse il arrive il dit <lit : rouge tout est rouge tout est rouge> alors <toi qui marches comme un vieillard tout bizarre les yeux hagards sans rien voir> mais il peut pas lui dire <lit : qui donc as-tu tué>

T: yes so let's go so you would like to put so then you would like to switch he comes he says (she reads) "red all is red all is red" then "you who walk all weird with such a distraught look without seeing anything" but he cannot say (she reads) "who did you kill?"

Majda: mais non on continue c'qu'on a mis là puis après <lit: qu'est-il arrivé> après il dit <lit: rouge tout est rouge> et après le chœur i dit eh <lit: qui donc as-tu tué>

M: no we continue what we put there then after (she reads) "what happened?" and then he says (she reads) red all is red" and then the choir says eh (she reads) "who did you kill?"

Teacher: d'accord d'accord j'ai compris (ok I understood)

...

Brice: après i dit en fait on garde le début de ce qu'on avait dit mais eh quand ils disent <lit: qu'est-il arrivé> Édipe i dit rouge etc et après le chœur il demande qui donc as-tu tué

B: after he says in fact we keep the beginning of what we had but when they say <he reads: what happened?> Oedipus says red and so on and then the choir asks who did you kill?

5.2.3 About culture

Working with the text to create dialogues does not enable the students to give all the necessary details to understand Oedipus's story. In order to do so, the teacher finds a way to introduce other elements which are present in a Greek tragedy but absent in a simplified version written for teenagers:

(17) Bekhta, EB, about writing the first version

Bekhta: le coryphée i peut dire quoi?

B: the coryphée what can it say?

Teacher: alors tu t'souviens on a dit qu'le coryphée i disait toutes les bonnes choses à propos d'Édipe i lui r'monte le moral à chaque fois alors que le chœur c'est l'expression de:

T: so do you remember we said that the coryphée said all the good things about Oedipus and keeps spirits high while the choir is the expression of

Bekhta: de tout c'qui est méchant

B: everything that's mean

Teacher: de ses angoisses c'est ça ces inquiétudes chaque fois quand i s'trouve méchant coupable c'est le chœur qui parle

T: of his fears, that's it his worries every time he finds himself mean guilty it is the choir who speaks

Working together and with the text draws their attention outside of class on words and the world that is further than their familiar boundaries:

(18) Hassan & Arthur, class discussion about the text of the play

Hassan: je sais c'est quoi la sphinx c'est pas l'truc d'Égypte là avec le nez cassé

H: I know what is the sphinx isn't it the thing in Egypt with the broken nose

Teacher: qu'est-ce tu veux dire?

T: what do you mean?

Hassan: la sphinx en fait c'est le truc d'égypte {avec le nez cassé}

H: the sphinx in fact it's the thing in Egypt with the broken nose

Teacher: {absolument} (yes absolutely)

Hassan: j'ai vu des photos hier

H: I've seen photos yesterday

Teacher: absolument très bien

Arthur: comme dans le film

A: as in the movie

5.2.4 About writing

Looking at what they wrote on topics given by the professor it is important to compare productions before and after, keeping in mind that no instruction was given which focused only on forms.

Mid-november, Arthur is asked to invent a tale. Before he has picked a tale he was supposed to read and has heard the others retell theirs. This is what he writes:

(19) Arthur, FL1, written production

Il était une fois une petite fille qui habite à paris une grande et sombre ville ses cheveux étaient si noire et lise qu'on lapelé Grose vache tout les jour elle jouet dehord avec ces copain et copine il joué à cahe cahe et à chat elle avait une amoureux qui sappelle Kévin et après avec ces parent elle va à la campagne le week- keen elle tiré les pigeons avec son lance-rochet et

(once upon a time a little girl who lives in paris a big and dark city her hair was so black and straight that she was called big cow every day she played outside with these <meaning her> male and female friends they played hide and seek and tag she had a lover who's name is Kevin and after with these <meaning her> parent she goes to the country the week end she shoots at pigeons with her throw-rocks <meaning catapult> and)

Obviously there is no punctuation, no consistency to transform this series of sentences into a text and it is not finished in the allotted time. Mid-June he was asked to continue a story (see Annex D) using all information given through the interview of the family:

(20) Arthur, FL1, written production

Dimanche dernier ,en fin d'après-midi ,après une longue promenade en forêt ,Bob et sa famille retournaient à la voiture.Bob suivait ses parents lorsqu'il vit son chien s'engager brusquement sur un petit sentier et il a entendu un bruit il vat dans la forêt ou il y a u le bruit et il voit son chien et il sont perdus dans la forêt tout les deux. Mais son chien a du flair et il retrouve le chemin. Mais il a toujours pas trouver sa famille donc il continut sa route et il reentan le même bruit il y va et il trouve un trésor ou il y a plein de bijou qui brille il le prend et il marche encore et encore et il arrive dans un petit village et il sonne chez quelqu'un chez un Mesieu Bizaud et il di ques qui se passe Nous somme perdu moi et mon chien et il dit Mais ont na trouver un trésor regarder et il appel la police et elle vien et il appelle leurs parents et il vient et il pleur de joie

(Last Sunday ,at the end of the afternoon, after a long walk in the woods ,Bob and his family returned to the car. Bob was behind his parents when he saw his dog abruptly take a small way and he heard a noise he goes into the woods where there was the noise and he sees his dog and they're both lost in the woods. But his dog has a good nose and he finds his way back. he still has not found his family so he keeps on going and hears the same noise again he goes and finds a treasure where there are many jewels who shine he takes it and walks until he gets to a small village and he rings a bell it is Mr Bizaud's and he says what's happening. We are lost me and my dog and he says but we have found a treasure look and he calls the police and it comes and calls their parents and they come and they weep for joy)

This text is longer and there are some traces of organization that were absent in the other: first at least at the beginning (before he only focuses on the content) there are some items of punctuation. Some elements are logically linked with connectors such as BUT and SO, for example: <lost but with the dog's scent able to find the right trail>, or, <on the right trail but still without the parents>, or, <lost but with a treasure so interesting>, or, <without the parents so keep on walking>. Apart from the moment when they discover the treasure which is not detailed and seems unex-

pected, the rest is pretty coherent since, once you find a village, you ask for help from the first adult you meet and then it becomes the police's job to find the parents which they do. You even have the common expression 'pleurer de joie' (weep for joy).

Mariem and Kenitra (French L2 speakers) are mainly looking for words: this is what Mariem finds in January when she has to write the text which goes with pictures of a comic strip:

(21) Mariem, FL2, written production

elvire . adieu léon ! non tiens bon je vai te faire sortir de la est le monstre il aperoche de bateau est léon il peauce le bateau est le monstre tombes est ce noyer et léon et elvire sore san est safe

(elvire good bye leon! no hold on I'm gonna get you out of here is (=et/and) the monster it gets near boat is (=et/and) leon he pushes the boat is (=et/and) the monster falls is (=et/and) this (=se/himself) drown and leon and elvire go out sound and safe)

In this small text two expressions are directly reused from what has been read in class, <tiens bon> (hold on) and <sain et sauf> (safe and sound).

Three months later when doing the same activity as Arthur (example 20), this is what she produces:

(22) Mariem, FL2, written production

bob sans réfléchir avais suivai son chien bambou ils on traversais la forêt où ils était entrain de ses promener avec leur parents bambou et bob on fait une grande aventure bob dans cette aventure il a conu beaucoup de chause avec son chien bambou bob et son chien bambou il était très courageux et leur parent il était très fait de souci bob et bambou il sont trouvai un tresor qui est rempli de bijou et des colye

(bob without think had (1st person sing) followed (imperfective) his dog bamboo they we (=ont/have) crossed (imperfective) the forest where they were walking with his parents bambou and bob we (=ont/have) had a great adventure bob in this adventure he has known a lot of things with his dog bamboo bob and his dog bamboo he was very courageous and his parent he was very worried bob and bamboo he were found a treasure which is filled with jewels and necklaces)

Not only is the text the double of what she produced the first time but she uses as many of the clues as possible provided by the context (see Annex D): Instead of following the parents the boy follows the dog, the notion of big adventure, the fact that the boy is courageous and found a treasure, that the parents worried. What is even more outstanding is the use of subordination: Bob without thinking had followed..., ... the forest where they were walking with his parents ... a treasure which is filled with jewels and necklaces. In the first text, the only means used to link clauses was 'and'.

Even for somebody who is not fluent in French, it is obvious that deviations from the norm are what characterize the various written productions of these students. Hassan (an early bilingual) was able to write a coherent text right from the beginning of the year but we needed to read his text out loud to be able to understand it. However, we found some regularity even if idiosyncratic:

(23) Hassan, EB, written production⁶

⁶ This task was to compose the continuation of a text they read in pieces before.

... est je nous pasons par une chachette nous prenons une la possion je la boit il en reste in peit peux je vois la sorcier elle nous pourssui est je voie le chat porte maleure je tombe la possion coule est le chat porte maleure touche la possion magique est redeviens humain jucat la fin de sa vie est nous vequrion heureux nous avons plus jamais vu l'horrible sorcière.

(is (=et/and) I we go through a hiding spot we take a the potion I drink it there is some left a bit can (=peu/bit) I see the sorcerer she runs after us is (=et/and) I way (=vois/see) the bad luck cat I fall the potion runs is (=et/and) the bad luck cat touches the magic potion is (=et/and) is again human until the end of his life is (=et/and) we lived happy we have never seen the horrible sorceress)

/ \tilde{O} / no matter which forms it takes (on, ons, or ont) is the morpheme Hassan systematically uses for the subject-verb agreement with the 1st person plural pronoun, nous. 'Ils vécutent heureux' (they lived happy ever after) usually found at the end of a story, is modified accordingly and consequently the verb ending bears the regular mark (in standard French it is 'nous vécumés heureux').

The difference between the first and the last composition is barely noticeable:

(24) Hassan, EB, written production

Bob avait vue des trace de pat que je 'ile navait jammaît vu autrefoi je me suit il sait re-tournait est je il ne vouyer plus mes ces parents je me suis il sais perdu mes je ne me suis il ne sait pas fait trop de couci car il savait que ces parents les retrouvait

(Bob had view (=vu/seen) some trace of feet (=pas) that I he had never seen before I turned he know (=is himself) turned back and I he didn't see my these (ses = his) parents I got he know (=is himself) got lost but I didn't he didn't know (=is himself) worry too much for he knew that these (ses= his) parents would find them)

Looking more closely: in the beginning of his text Hassan changes the narrative style from 1st person (which is impossible considering what precedes, see Annex D) to the required 3rd person. This is an exercise he was supposed to do the other way round when changing a description into an inner dialogue for the play. He had trouble doing it at the time but obviously he has now come to master the technique.

5.3 Deviation from the norm and development

If the criterion is standardized French, looking at the last example, the impression of very minor changes in the written productions while having spent so much time and energy on the project will lead to the conclusion of failure. But the fact that these students were year after year told that they failed compels (at least the researchers we are) to put the results in perspective:

A pedagogical tradition, above all inspired by the idea that to present or tolerate faults in a child's written production can only encourage them into not respecting the orthographic rules, will analyze these productions as containing too many errors, since this tradition only uses one criterion: what is missing, to be correct. But it is also possible to consider these productions as a display of the scientific method of trial and error, a way to test hypothesis on language, not more. The construction of writing is thus not a process which takes place without the other children, the nearest adults, the teachers. This

process is not triggered at a time defined by the institution. (*Besse, 1991, our translation*)⁷

In fact, changes are deeper and are mainly over working methods and ideas about school tasks. The best piece of proof is what happened to the students the year after: Hassan (EB) for example was able to write a medieval style tale alone and in standard French⁸.

Majda (EB) wrote a chapter in a medieval style novel and was, like Lamia (EB), given honors the three terms. Lamia who complained that she did too much writing and not enough grammar said a year later that she missed writing and acting. Nothing can be said of Arthur and Brice (both FL1), the first one moved with his parents to another area and the second one was operated on and stayed in hospital for six months. Bekhta (EB) was the one who didn't reap much benefit from the project because she became extremely fascinated by boys rather than school work. Mariem & Kenitra (both FL2) went through the project a second time, with a different text and a different topic to work on. They go through the same courses as students who have been in school in France from the beginning. This is what Mariem produces two months after the beginning of the new school year:

(25) Mariem, FL2, written production

L'enfance d'Orphée. l'œil des enfers

L'histoire commence dans un endroit ou il y avai un jeune garçons ce jeune s'appelle Orphée. Orphée est un jeune garçons sympatique et un jour il trouva un coffre il arrivait pas à l'ouvrir il trouva un baton et soudain le coffre souvre dans ce coffre il faisait noir il voulait regarder de plus en plus près puis il sent une odeur cette odeur était mauvais puis il entra dans le coffre et soudain le coffre se referma sur lui-même Orphée sait fait mal puis il tomba dans la profondeur du coffre et soudain il voit un œil rouge Orphée a etait effrayé de puis un serviteur apparaît s ce serviteur se débarassa de cet œil rouge et le serviteur aida Orphé à sortir et Orphée rentra chez lui.

(Orpheus' s childhood, hell's eye, the story starts in a place where there was a young boys this young boy is called Orpheus. Orpheus is a nice young boy and one day he finds a trunk he didn't manage to open it he found a stick and suddenly the trunk opens in the trunk it was dark he wanted to look closer then he smells an odor the smell was bad then he got into the trunk and suddenly the trunk closed Orpheus know (= is himself) hurt then he fell in the depth of the trunk and suddenly he sees a red eye. Orpheus has was (=has been) frightened and a servant showed up this servant got rid of the red eye and the servant helped Orpheus to get out and Orpheus want back home.)

⁷ Une certaine tradition 'pédagogique' inspirée avant tout par l'idée que présenter à l'enfant ou tolérer chez lui – des formes 'fautives' ne peut que l'encourager à une manière de laxisme orthographique, ne lira ces écritures que comme autant d'erreurs, puisque cette tradition ne prend en compte comme critère d'analyse que ce qui leur manque pour être correctes.

Mais il est aussi possible de considérer ces écritures comme des 'essais', une manière de tester des hypothèses sur la langue, sans qu'il soit question pour autant de leur donner un autre statut. ...

La construction de l'écrit par l'enfant n'est donc pas un processus qui se déroule isolément des autres enfants, des adultes proches, des enseignants. Ce processus ne se déclenche pas au moment fixé institutionnellement. (*Besse, 1991*)

⁸ The tales can be found on: <http://www.ac-paris.fr> at Collège Robert Doisneau.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Drama in school: playing or working?

The results we found resemble those obtained in similar settings, which leads us to believe there is enough evidence that students improve linguistically and socially when participating in creative drama programs. In turn, the question is about the role of drama activities at school: is it a period of time devoted to playing (in the sense of playing in a game) instead of working? It would then mean a sort of pause in between more intensive working periods, where everybody, students and teacher alike, can leave aside the stress inherent to more mental activities.

This can't be all. Besides providing a sort of breathing space in the school day, drama activities constitute a natural setting for situations where social skills are under work: taking turns on the floor, ignoring distractions from peers or else, following directions such as those given by the comedian/director; these are made obvious because results are immediately seen and felt. Even apologizing becomes necessary when one's actions have infringed on another. All these effects are felt in the case of drama activities being integrated or not into the curriculum. What the results of this project show is an extension of the role of drama if it is completely integrated in school activities.

The relation between instruction and development is a problem that Vygotsky (1934:1997) dealt with, using dialectical philosophy. The difference between the current and the desired developmental levels is bridged thanks to the interaction with more capable others, who direct one's behavior.

The internalization process (to be understood as appropriation) is not therefore, about a shift of some epistemological substance from the outside to the inside, but about an increasing participation of an individual in the social practices and regulatory discourses of their community (Lake & Wenger, 1991, cited by R.J Parkes, 2004).

It means that the more the individual participates *in social practices and regulatory discourse*, the more they learn. An example is given with the scene where the sphinx meets Oedipus. Several students wanted to say the riddle: who walks on four legs in the morning, two in the afternoon and three at night? On the other hand, since they had trouble memorizing it they resented doing it. They were made to stage a multi-headed character which did not only represent the conflicts between them (see example (6) but also their inner conflict. Similarly with the introduction of the antique choir and the coryphée in the play (see example (17): in the class discussions about the myth, students sometimes found Oedipus horrible, sometimes pitied him, especially when he decides to gouge his own eyes, and sometimes admired him, especially when he wins. Giving a different side of the same story through the choir (negative side) and the coryphée (positive one) they were able to voice their discussions (views?) of the text.

According to Vygotsky (*ibid*), the interaction with 'more capable others' does not suffice; they also need the support of cultural tools and signs. The reading material (see Annex A) was thought as mediating tools for both collective and individual productions.

Although many interpretations of the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development, one of the main characteristics of Vygotsky's theory about the development of the mind) restrict themselves to discussions of parent-child, teacher-student, or peer-peer interactions, I am interested in the effects of broadening the definition of participants in the zone; Just as the child can appropriate the more sophisticated strategies of an adult as a result of their interaction, so too can their encounter with literature, film or art have consequences for their behavior, subjectivity or identity that could be considered developmental (Parks, R.J. 2004).

The interactions with others and with the reading material are viewed as a learning support system collectively built, parallel to the Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) (Bruner, 1983). This support system refers to the cultural system that "*frames the interaction of human beings in such a way as to aid the aspirant speaker in mastering the uses of languages*" (p. 120). We come to equate the interactions with others and with the material as instructional scaffolding, providing sufficient support to learn both language and skills.

We acknowledge the difference outlined by neurologists⁹ between the skills related to oral and written language. It certainly plays a role in explaining some of the difficulties still experienced by the students. Nevertheless, drama was used, hence oral speech, to grab fragments of a literary text they read to use them in writing. The analogy can be made with the egocentric speech.

Linguists stress the importance of language, of the necessary mastering of oral language before starting with the written one. To read, one must first be able to speak, express oneself, exchange ideas, understand what is said, be understood, a practice that is first acquired at home and continues at school. To express oneself, to communicate orally is a prerequisite to the acquisition of the written language at school. ((Horellou- Lafarge et Segré, 2003, our translation)¹⁰.

Creative drama integrated into school activities is much more than a pause or a means to acquire social skills; it is the egocentric speech for students with learning disabilities.

6.2 Literacy: reading/writing or pushing away one's world boundaries?

The more we know somebody, the more we have in common with them, the less words we need to communicate with them. ((Bentolila, 2004). our translation).¹¹

⁹ Duval-Gombert (2000) has studied aphasia and showed that some patients even though they retain their capacity to communicate orally are unable to read and write because they can no longer find a use for paper and pen and more drastically do not understand the combinations of tools such as letter in the making of words.

¹⁰ Les linguistes soulignent l'importance du langage, de la maîtrise nécessaire de la langue orale avant d'aborder la langue écrite. Pour lire, il faut d'abord savoir parler, s'exprimer, échanger, comprendre ce qui est dit, et se faire comprendre, pratique qui s'acquiert d'abord dans le milieu familial et se poursuit dans le cadre scolaire. S'exprimer, communiquer oralement est un préalable à toute acquisition scolaire de la langue écrite. (Horellou- Lafarge et Segré, 2003)

¹¹ Plus on connaît quelqu'un, plus on a de choses en commun avec lui et moins on aura besoin des mots pour communiquer ensemble. (Bentolila, 2004).

This is the exact feeling Hassan ‘words out’ for his French teacher in one of the class discussions at the beginning of the year:

“Nous on s’ comprend m’dame même si vous vous comprenez pas”
(we understand each other Madam, even though you don’t understand us).

Another effect of the project is one similar to the one observed by McClenaghan & Doecke (2005). Students used the words provided by others through the books but they mixed them up with elements of their own world. It started when they acted; they couldn’t keep from dancing. Soon enough, the rhythm of the hip hop dance became their trademark when creating the final version of the play (see the use of rhyme and repetition in the final version, Annex C).

This calls for a redefinition or extension of the definition traditionally given to the notion of literacy. Put into Freire’s words (1998), literacy becomes “*skills to read this world for meaning*”. In other words, the world is part of the ability. If we dare paraphrase Gee (2001), words give meaning to the world as the world gives meaning to words. The idea is therefore to expand each one’s world and by the same token to increase each one’s words and this experience we observed represents an attempt to do so. The teachers and the students involved, but also (as B. Doecke rightly pointed at) the researchers (the two linguists specialized in 2nd language acquisition and the researcher/teacher in Educational research), the actress / director who helped with the play, all worked on and reworked their project in tandem with words, deeds, objects, tools, symbols, settings and ways of being, doing, thinking and valuing and thus can be described using Gee’s terminology (2001) as “local literacy”.

The students work and rework in tandem with

- objects; they used tables under which they hid to show the dead city of Thebes,
- words; they used the words of the books they read whether alone or collectively,
- deeds and symbols; acting has proved a powerful tool to transform signs on a page into images in the mind, from a sign ‘dead’ they were each able to give a body illustration of death.

This project was work on ways of being, doing, thinking, valuing. Of course, the students have not completely defeated their resistance to a culture that represents for most of them something foreign and that is imposed on them. However they found a way to do two things at once: diminish the power of the foreign element by incorporating their self into it and increase their own power by incorporating words they didn’t have before.

Reading is interesting when it precisely means tear oneself away from their rut and live unknown experiences of conscience. For that, nothing is better than a writer very different from who one is. Then there could be more exciting encounters than the only recognition of the self in a book. (*Eric Chevillard, interview, France Inter, May 5, 2005, our translation*)¹²

¹² *L’intérêt de la lecture c’est précisément de s’arracher de son ornière et de vivre des expériences de conscience inédites et pour cela rien ne vaut un écrivain très différent de soi et là il pourrait y avoir des rencontres qui seraient peut-être un peu plus excitantes que la sim-*

In conclusion, as Cross (2004) rightly observes:

‘Teaching’ has no meaning in and by itself, and there is no ‘one teacher’ that has sole authority over absolutely everything related to the act of teaching.

This implies that working in a group is not only interesting for students but also for teachers and researchers. Group projects should be promoted because they enable each to exchange solutions they wouldn't have thought of if working alone.

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APPENDIX A

Reservoir of ideas: fight all kinds of monster and self determination

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Le Petit Prince, a modern tale. | ■ <i>A stranger on the earth, criticism of the adult world</i> |
| ■ 1 tale each amongst 20 from Europe: a western cultural heritage | ■ <i>Facing the sorceress, role of the confrontation in asserting oneself</i> |
| ■ Mémoires d'un chien, fictional autobiography | ■ <i>From exclusion to happiness, self built through life.</i> |
| ■ Oedipe le Maudit, heritage from the Antiquity | ■ <i>Destiny and self determination of the gimp</i> |
| ■ L'île du Monstril, between novel and comics | ■ <i>Facing a monster, changes for the best</i> |
| ■ Cassandre, another Greek myth | ■ <i>The prophecy, inner knowledge of oneself and one's life</i> |
| ■ Un poisson nommé Jean-Paul, autobiography. | ■ <i>Nightmares made out of daily life</i> |

APPENDIX B: ŒDIPE LE MAUDIT, CH4

chapitre 4
L'ÉNIGME DE LA SPHINX

Depuis plusieurs heures déjà, Œdipe chemine à travers la plaine verdoyante. la route est agréable au soleil de printemps. Au loin se dessinent les murailles, une ville certainement. Mais le jeune homme fronce les sourcils: d'habitude quand on approche d'une ville, les voyageurs se font plus nombreux. or il réalise qu'il n'a croisé personne depuis longtemps.

- Étrange murmure-t-il, tout en assurant le bâton dans sa main.

Il n'a pas vraiment peur, oh non ! Mais c'est vraiment étrange: étrange, cette route déserte, étranges, ces murailles, qui semblent désertes aussi, maintenant qu'il s'en approche...

Inconsciemment, Œdipe a ralenti le pas. Mais ces derniers jours, à force de vivre seul et de ne compter que sur lui-même, il a pris de l'assurance. Sans oublier sa victoire sur l'homme au char! Aussi reprend-il sa marche, plus ferme et plus volontaire qu'auparavant.

Arrivé à la porte de la ville, il n'est pas au bout de ses surprises: toujours personne! Une vraie ville fantôme! Il hésite: quel chemin prendre? Doit-il longer la muraille, ou s'enfoncer au coeur de la cité?

Arrivé à la porte de la ville, il n'est pas au bout de ses surprises: toujours personne! Une vraie ville fantôme! Il hésite: quel chemin prendre? Doit-il longer la muraille,

ou s'enfoncer au coeur de la cité? Il avance un peu, quand il voit à terre un cadavre, celui d'un jeune homme Pas beaucoup plus vieux que lui. Et pas beau à voir: lacéré, déchiqueté, comme s'il avait été surpris par une énorme bête sauvage. Impressionné, Œdipe examine les alentours, et aperçoit un second cadavre, un peu plus loin. Il gît près de la muraille, dans le même état que le premier. Que faire? Il sursaute: sur sa droite une porte vient de claquer. Il se dirige alors de ce côté.

Peut-être va-t-il enfin trouver un être vivant! Plus rien. A-t-il rêvé? Non, de nouveau un bruit. Cette fois, c'est une voix, à peine un chuchotement. Il tend l'oreille:

- Sauve-toi, étranger, sauve-toi vite!
- Qui parle? Où es-tu? Que se passe-t-il?

APPENDIX C: THE FINAL VERSION SCÈNE 2 THÈBES

Œdipe/HASSAN	Ca fait des heures et des heures que je marche!	
Œdipe/BRICE	Heureusement le temps est agréable! J'adore le printemps.	
Œdipe/HASSAN	Mais je boite, que je boite!	
Œdipe/BRICE	Tiens, qu'est-ce que c'est là bas?	
Œdipe/HASSAN	Des murailles?	
Œdipe/BRICE	Une ville certainement.	
Œdipe/HASSAN	Mais c'est bizarre!	
Œdipe/BRICE	D'habitude, quand on approche d'une ville, les voyageurs se font plus nombreux. Je n'ai croisé personne depuis longtemps.	
Œdipe/HASSAN	C'est vraiment étrange.	
Chœur/	Déserte, cette route là, Étrange ces murailles là bas. Tu as peur, n'est-ce pas? Les surprises ne s'arrêtent pas là	
Coryphée/Sophie et Martine	Allons hâte le pas.	
	A force de vivre seul, en silence	[silās]
	Tu as pris de l'assurance.	[asurās]
	Sans compter ta victoire	[viktwar]
	Sur l'homme au char!	[šar]
	Reprends ta marche d'un air	[εr]
	Plus ferme et plus volontaire.	[volōtεr]
Œdipe/HASSAN	Mais c'est quoi cette ville?	
Œdipe/BRICE	Toujours personne. Une vraie ville fantôme!	
Œdipe/HASSAN	Quel chemin prendre?	
Œdipe/BRICE	Longer la muraille ou s'enfoncer au coeur de la cité? Oh! Y a personne?	
Œdipe/HASSAN	Où êtes-vous?	
Œdipe/BEN et HAMZA	OH OH....	
Œdipe/BEN	Ah! Un cadavre,	

Œdipe/HAMZA	Quelle horreur!	
Chœur/	Pauvre jeune homme tué,	[tye]
	Lacéré, déchiqueté,	[dešikøte]
	Par une bête sauvage attaqué.	[atzke]
	Et son corps à moitié dévoré	[devore]
	Décapité,	[dekapite]
	Ici même abandonné!	[abådone]
Villageois/	Sauve toi étranger, sauve toi ...	[twa]
Œdipe/HASSAN	J'entends des voix...	[vwa]
Œdipe/BRICE	Qui me parle?	
Œdipe/HASSAN	Qui est là?	
Œdipe/BEN	Une jeune fille!	
Œdipe/HAMZA	Ouvrez la porte!	
Villageois/	File étranger sauve ta vie!	
	Elle va te déchiqueter	
Œdipe/BRICE et HASSAN	Que se passe-t-il ici ? Quelle porte claque?	

APPENDIX D: LE PETIT COLLÉGIEN SEPTEMBRE

Villageois/ Sauve toi.... la sphinx...

LE TRESOR RETROUVE SA PLACE

Interview de la famille	Quelle extraordinaire aventure pour cet enfant et son chien!
- <i>Êtes-vous fiers de votre fils?</i>	
- Nous sommes fiers de lui et de son chien Bambou sans l'aide duquel le trésor n'aurait jamais été retrouvé.	Dimanche dernier, en fin d'après-midi, après une longue promenade en forêt, Bob et sa famille retournaient à la voiture. Bob suivait ses parents lorsqu'il vit
- <i>A quel moment vous êtes-vous rendu compte de leur disparition?</i>	sont chien s'engager brusquement sur un petit sentier...
- A la fin de la promenade lorsque nous sommes arrivés à la voiture.	
- <i>Vous êtes-vous fait beaucoup de souci?</i>	
- Oui, bien sûr, mais Bob a toujours été courageux et débrouillard.	
Interview of the family	What an extraordinary adventure for this child and his dog!
-Are you proud of your son?	
- Yes, we are proud of him and of his dog Bambou. Without the dog's help, the treasure would have never been found	Last Sunday, at the end of the afternoon, after a long walk in the woods, Bob and his family were returning to their car. Bob was following his parents when he
- When did you realize they were lost?	saw his dog suddenly take a small trail

- At the end of the walk when we got to ...
the car.

-Were you very worried?

- Of course, but Bob has always been
courageous and resourceful.

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